

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6752
INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
AMCSUL SAO PAULO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BRASILIA 2346

EO 11652 GDS
TAGS PGOV SHUM BR
SUBJECT: ARRESTS IN CURTIBA CAUSE WIDESPREAD CONCERN

THE FOLLOWING REPORT WAS PREPARED LARGELY BY CONGEN SAO PAULO.

1. SUMMARY. FEDERAL POLICE ARRESTED 10 TEACHERS AND JOURNALISTS IN CURITIBA, STATE OF PARANA, ON MARCH 18. THE TEN ARE BEING HELD INCOMMUNICADO PENDING INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED INFRACTIONS OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY LAW. AN ELEVENTH PERSON, A WOMAN JOURNALIST AND TEACHER, WAS KIDNAPPED MARCH 17 BY UNIDENTIFIED MEN, AND RELEASED ON THE ROAD JUST ACROSS THE SAO PAULO BORDER THE EVENING OF MARCH 18. SHE ALLEGES THAT SHE WAS QUESTIONED ABOUT HER CONNECTIONS WITH THE OTHER TEN AND SUBJECTED TO ELECTRIC SHOCKS ON HER ARMS. THE CASE HAS BECOME HEAVILY POLITICIZED IN CURITIBA, IN SAO PAULO AND IN THE NATIONAL CONGRESS IN BRASILIA. THE BRAZILIAN BAR ASSOCIATION, THE JOURNALISTS UNION, THE PARANA JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSION, THE FEMININE MOVEMENT FOR AMNESTY AND AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL BECAME ALMOST IMMEDIATELY INVOLVED ON MARCH 18, PROTESTING THE ARRESTS, WHICH HAVE STIMULATED CONSIDERABLE SPECULATION. FOR SOME OBSERVERS, THEY REPRESENT AN ISOLATED LOCAL INCIDENT BY AN OVERZEALOUS, MISDIRECTED POLICE UNIT. FOR OTHERS THE ARRESTS

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ARE PART OF AN EFFORT BY EXTREME RIGHT WINGERS TO BUILD PRESSURES AGAINST PROSPECTIVE INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES. END SUMMARY.

2. THE LOCAL FEDERAL POLICE UNIT IN CURITIBA ARRESTED 10 TEACHERS AND JOURNALISTS ON MARCH 18. ACCORDING TO THE POLICE, THOSE DETAINED ARE MEMBERS OF ORGANIZATIONS CALLED THE ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES (AED/OFFICINA), AND THE CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND

EVALUATION (CEPAED/OCA), WHICH RUN TWO NURSERY SCHOOLS FOR CHILDREN THREE TO SIX YEARS OF AGE. ONE OF THOSE ARRESTED IS LUIZ MANFREDINI, THE JORNAL DO BRASIL BUREAU CHIEF WHO INTERVIEWED LT. COL. TARCISO NUNES FERREIRA (WHO HAS BEEN DISCIPLINED FOR HIS POLITICAL STATEMENTS(BRASILIA 2192). GOVERNMENT SOURCES TOLD THE PRESS THAT MANFREDINI'S ARREST HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH HIS INTERVIEW. MANFREDINI REPORTEDLY SENDS HIS CHILD TO THE OCA SCHOOL. TWO OF THE PERSONS ARRESTED, REINALDO AND SUELY ATEM, WERE ON THE LIST OF ALLEGED COMMUNISTS IN GOVERNMENT PUBLISHED LAST OCTOBER BY FORMER ARMY MINISTER FROTA. THE ATEMS AND THREE OTHER ARRESTEES WORKED FOR IPARDES (THE PARANA INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT).

3. JUST BEFORE THE TEN WERE ARRESTED, ON THE EVENING OF MARCH 17, JURACILDA VEIGA, A TEACHER AND JOURNALIST, WAS REPORTEDLY KIDNAPPED, TAKEN TO A CELL, QUESTIONED ABOUT HER CONNECTION WITH THE OTHER TEN AND GIVEN ELECTRIC SHOCKS ON HER ARMS. MS. VEIGA WAS REPORTEDLY TAKEN ACROSS THE BORDER TO SAO PAULO STATE AND DROPPED ON THE ROAD NEAR THE TOWN OF REGISTRO. MS. VEIGA WAS INTERVIEWED BY THE PRESS MARCH 22, DURING WHICH SHE DISPLAYED THE BRUSIES ALLEGEDLY CAUSED BY THE SHOCKS. GEN. RUI DE PAULO COUTO, COMMANDER OF THE 5TH MILITARY REGION, SAID THE ARMY WOULD BEGIN AN INVESTIGATION OF THE KIDNAPPING. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT HE WAS ASTONISHED AT THE ALLEGED "COMMUNIST TACTICS" THAT HAD BEEN EMPLOYED AT THE TWO NURSERY SCHOOLS.

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4. ASIDE FROM THE KIDNAPPING INCIDENT, THE GOVERNMENT, THROUGH PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESMAN COL. TOLEDO CAMARGO, HAS DEFENDED THE ARRESTS AND THE SUSPECTS' INCOMMUNICABILITY AS LEGAL UNDER THE NATIONAL SECURITY LAW. IN RESPONSE TO CONSIDERABLE MDB PRESSURE IN CONGRESS, SENATE PRESIDENT PETRONIO PORTELLA TOLD THE MDB LEADERSHIP THAT HE HAD CHECKED WITH JUSTICE MINISTER ARMANDO FALCAO AND WAS TOLD THAT THE PERSONS ARRESTED WERE BEING SET FREE AFTER QUESTIONING BY THE POLICE. ON MARCH 22, HOWEVER, THE JUSTICE MINISTER ISSUED A NOTE REAFFIRMING THE LEGAL CHARACTER OF THE ARRESTS AND DENYING THAT HE HAD RECOMMENDED

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

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THAT THE PERSONS BE RELEASED AFTER QUESTIONING.

5. LAWYERS FOR THE ARRESTED PERSONS, AND A DELEGATION OF POLITICIANS--SEVEN STATE DEPUTIES, MDB SENATOR LEITE CHAVES, A FEDERAL DEPUTY AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE MDB MUNICIPAL DIRECTORATE--TRIED TO SEE THE PRISONERS MARCH 22 AND WERE REFUSED. THE LAWYERS, SUPPORTED BY THE BRAZILIAN BAR ASSOCIATION, HAVE SUBMITTED AN INJUNCTION FOR HABEAS CORPUS TO THE SUPREME MILITARY TRIBUNAL. OTHER GROUPS, SUCH AS THE JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSION, THE JOURNALISTS UNION, THE FEMININE MOVEMENT FOR AMNESTY AND AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL BECAME ALMOST IMMEDIATELY ACTIVE IN PROTESTING THE ARRESTS. JUSTICE AND PEACE CHARACTERIZED THEM AS "SUBVERSION PRACTICED IN THE NAME OF THE LAW". THE COMMISSION SUGGESTED THAT THE MOTIVES FOR THE ARRESTS WERE TO PREVENT DEMOCRATIC NORMALIZATION. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE PATRICIA FEENEY, WHO HAS BEEN IN BRAZIL SINCE THE BEGINNING OF MARCH, FLEW TO CURITIBA IN AN UNSUCCESSFUL EFFORT TO SEE THE PRISONERS.

6. COMMENTING ON THE ARRESTS, VETERAN JORNAL DO BRASIL POLITICAL COLUMNIST CARLOS CASTELLO BRANCO SAID "IT HAS NOW BECOME A LEGITIMATE IMPRESSION THAT NOT ONLY THOSE MILITARY OFFICERS WHO DECLARE THEIR OPPOSITION TO OFFICIAL POLICIES ARE TO BE PUNISHED, BUT

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THOSE JOURNALISTS WHO LISTEN TO THEM AS WELL." MEANWHILE, EDUCATION MINISTER NEY BRAGA, A FORMER GOVERNOR OF PARANA STATE AND GENERALLY EXPECTED TO BE CHOSEN BY GEISEL TO RETURN TO THE STATEHOUSE IN 1979, ISSUED AN OFFICIAL NOTE DENYING THAT EITHER HE OR HIS MINISTRY HAD ANY CONNECTION WITH OR RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ARRESTS. ON THE FLOOR OF CONGRESS, ARENA CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES VICE LEADER AND NOTED HARD-LINER JORGE ARBAGE STATED THAT MDB CRITICISM OF THE ARRESTS WAS AN "INSIDIOUS INTRIGUE FOR THE PURPOSE OF INJURING THE PATRIOTIC SENTIMENTS OF THE BRAZILIAN PEOPLE." ANOTHER ARENA CHAMBER VICE LEADER, AUGUSTO TREIN, MADE THE SOMEWHAT AMBIGUOUS CHANGE THAT

FURTHER SUCH INCIDENTS WILL OCCUR BETWEEN NOW AND THE VISIT OF PRESIDENT CARTER FOR "THE PURPOSE OF CREATING A CLIMATE OF PROVOCATIONS AND DISTORTIONS WHICH CAN ONLY BE FAVORABLE TO EXTREMIST FACTIONS."

7. COMMENT: THERE IS A STRONG SUSPICION AMONG SOME POLITICIANS AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS THAT THE ARRESTS ARE PART OF AN EFFORT TO BUILD RIGHT WING PRESSURES AGAINST POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION. SAO PAULO JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSION PRESIDENT DALMO DALLARI--WHO HAD BEEN IN CONTACT WITH THE COMMISSION IN CURITIBA--TOLD A CONGEN OFFICER, HOWEVER, THAT HE THOUGHT THE ARRESTS REPRESENT AN ISOLATED INCIDENT BY AN OVERZEALOUS, MISDIRECTED POLICE UNIT. HE THOUGHT THE PUBLIC AND POLITICAL REACTION TO THE ARRESTS WAS GOOD, IN THAT IT PUT THE GOVERNMENT ON NOTICE THAT IT WOULD HAVE TO BE MORE RIGOROUS IN ITS TREATMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS. THE CASE IS FAR FROM OVER, HOWEVER, AND WILL BE WATCHED CAREFULLY, INCLUDING BY THIS EMBASSY.
JOHNSON

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Message Attributes

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